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The Tactical Situation

4. According to the last report from the US defense attache staff in Phnom Penh, Khmer Communist forces yesterday launched attacks across a wide front north and northwest of Pochentong airport but no major insurgent breakthrough was reported. Government units on the Route 5 front north of Phnom Penh apparently launched clearing operations on the east bank of the Tonle Sap River yesterday. Fighting on other fronts around the capital was light.

5. Phnom Penh radio broadcast a military situation report today which reflected no significant combat in the capital area except for continued rocket and artillery attacks against Pochentong airport. Following the evacuation of the US Mission, an aircraft chartered by the Associated Press landed at Pochentong to evacuate a Cambodian stringer and his family. The airfield presumably remains usable.

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The Xuan Loc Battlefront

7. Heavy fighting is continuing in and around Xuan Loc. Reinforced defenders of the city have beaten back strong Communist attacks for four days and a number of sharp fights around the city reportedly have caused heavy Communist losses.

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8. Following the successful airlift of the 1st Airborne Brigade into positions south of the city, the regional commander is now ready to mount a counterattack with the Airborne brigade sweeping northeast of Xuan Loc in an attempt to cut off Communist units from resupply, while an armor and Airborne task force push toward the city and try to reopen Route 1. In response to an order from the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff, General Toan is placing reconnaissance units behind Communist lines to pinpoint North Vietnamese artillery positions so that air strikes can be mounted against them.

9. The South Vietnamese want to inflict heavy losses on the Communists, but they must at the same time avoid having their own forces pinned down and decimated by North Vietnamese artillery.

Military Action West and Southwest of Saigon

10. There were a series of significant contacts between South Vietnamese and Communist forces along the Long An - Dinh Tuong Province border on April 12. Elements of the South Vietnamese 7th Division reportedly inflicted heavy losses on a regiment of North Vietnamese 5th Division, which has been moving into this area.

11. Moreover, government forces from the delta will conduct an operation to hit the Communist 5th Division from the rear. A task force of infantry and armor units will sweep south from its current position near the Cambodia border and attack the 5th Division in western Long An Province, and at the same time, a part of the South Vietnamese 7th Division will attack from the south and has permission from Military Region 3 headquarters to advance as far north as Tan An. If successful, this pincer action should stall the Communist drive to cut major roads leading to Saigon from the delta.

12. Meanwhile, the Communists are moving additional forces into the area west of Saigon. Most of the North Vietnamese 9th Division and supporting

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air defense units have been detected shifting into northeastern Hau Nghia Province. These units had been concentrated along the Tay Ninh - Binh Duong Province border farther north. The Communists now have almost three full divisions--the 3rd, 5th and 9th--along Saigon's western defense perimeter, and this could well force the South Vietnamese to shift reinforcements to this front.

New Attacks in the Delta

13. Communist gunners are zeroing in on Can Tho, the largest and most important city in the delta. Can Tho was hit by rockets and at least 25 rounds of artillery fire on April 12, with several rounds impacting near the US Consulate General compound. Although there were no injuries or property damage reported, a fire is raging out of control only a few hundred yards from the compound. The shellings came from positions across the Bassac River in Vinh Long Province.

14. Communist forces also cut Route 4 at several points just north of Can Tho in Vinh Long Province. While the road was still closed at last report, government counterattacks have reportedly caused heavy casualties on Communist attackers. The open terrain around Route 4 makes it extremely difficult for the Communists to mass forces or establish firm blocking positions, and the road probably will be cleared soon.

15. The North Vietnamese 4th Division is still poised around Can Tho, but government commanders remain confident that they can keep the North Vietnamese away from the city. A number of sharp clashes on April 12 resulted in sizable Communist losses. Effective air support has played a major role in support of the government defenders.

Increased Threat Against Coastal Enclaves

16. Government holdings in coastal Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces are likely to be challenged soon. Elements of the North Vietnamese 968th Division were detected on April 11 along Route 1 near

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Cam Ranh. This division participated in the capture of Tuy Hoa and now has moved south to link up with the North Vietnamese 10th Division, apparently in preparation for attacks on the cities of Phan Rang and Phan Thiet.

17. Government forces defending the northern defenses of Phan Rang have reported some light contacts, but no serious attacks. Large truck convoys, however, have been sighted moving south from Nha Trang. There has been some heavy fighting outside of Phan Thiet over the past few days. The city was hit with sporadic shellings this morning, but the military situation remains stable.

Saigon Reorganizing Combat Units

18. The government is making considerable progress in rebuilding the combat units extracted from northern and central South Vietnam, and many of them will soon be ready for combat.

19. The best of these units, the Marine Division, already has two brigades which could be used in combat in an emergency. A third brigade is scheduled to complete reorganization by April 21, and a fourth brigade about a week later. One Marine brigade has already taken up defensive positions near the Bien Hoa airbase. Most Marine units probably will be held in reserve around Saigon.

20. The South Vietnamese 2nd and 3rd divisions also are making progress. The 2nd now has four operational battalions, and several others are scheduled to be ready for combat late next week. Altogether, the division expects to have 11 battalions formed and operational by early May. So far, the 3rd Division has only one battalion ready for combat, but it plans to form enough units to have a regiment by early May. In addition, three ranger groups should become operational later this month, and new artillery units are being created for assignment to rebuilt infantry regiments and divisions.

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